

## **Chapter Three**

# **Rural Legacy & Natural Resource Lands**

The landscape of King County's rural and resource areas is characterized by extensive forests, small-scale farms, free-flowing rivers and streams that provide high-quality habitat for fish and wildlife, and a wide variety of homes found in rural cities, small historic towns, and scattered on lots in a broad range of sizes. Large-scale, commercial forestry and mining have been the traditional land uses in the eastern half of King County where soils are thin and rocky, while farming continues in the prime soils found in the river valleys. Many rural residential communities are focused on scenic resources such as lakes, rivers and territorial views, or to lifestyle activities such as the keeping of horses.

The glacial soils and terrain in the rural and resource areas also create significant environmentally sensitive areas, such as steep, erodible slopes, wetlands and ground water recharge areas. Maintenance of tree cover, natural vegetation and wetlands are critical to prevention of erosion, flooding, property and habitat damage, the continued functioning of the ecosystem and preservation of rural character.

Conserving King County's rural and natural resource lands is integral to providing diversity in lifestyle choices, continuing farming and forestry economies, protecting environmental quality and wildlife habitat, and maintaining a link to King County's resource-based heritage.

### **Growth Management Act's Goals, Elements, and Requirements**

Part I of this chapter satisfies the Growth Management Act's mandatory Rural Element by designating rural lands in order to limit development in rural areas and prevent sprawl, by permitting land uses that are compatible with the rural character established in the King County Countywide Planning Policies, and by providing for a variety of rural densities; Further, it satisfies the mandatory Land Use Element by indicating the population densities that are appropriate for the Rural Area, and Goal 13 of the GMA by identifying and encouraging the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance. It also maintains and enhances natural resource-based industries and designated natural resource lands as required by the Act.

Part II of this chapter satisfies the Growth Management Act's Goal 8 to maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries; Requirement 36.70A.170 to designate natural resource lands; Requirement 36.70A.080 optional conservation element by conserving natural resource lands.

### **King County's Rural Communities**

King County's Rural Area, including communities such as the Hobart Plateau, Vashon Island, Snoqualmie Valley and Enumclaw Plateau, contains predominantly low density residential development, farms, forests, watersheds crucial for both fisheries and flood control, mining areas, small cities and towns, historic sites and buildings, archaeological sites and regionally important recreation areas. These rural uses and activities occur adjacent to and interact with the County's rich agriculture and forestry resources. The location of the Rural Area between the Urban Growth Area and most Resource Lands helps to protect commercial agriculture and timber from incompatible uses.

Designation and conservation of a Rural Area maintains rural community character as a valued part of King County's diversity. It also provides choices in living environments, maintains a link to King County's heritage, allows small-scale farming and forestry to continue and helps protect environmental quality and sensitive resources, such as ground water recharge areas. Rural areas also act to enhance urban areas and focus urban levels of development where they can be best served.

King County is required to have a Rural Element in its Comprehensive Plan by the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). A clear indication of which lands in King County will remain rural also will foster better use of limited funds for facilities and services by allowing the County to establish distinctly rural facility and service standards and to focus most public resources on growth and services in the Urban Growth Area.

## **King County's Resource Lands**

The growing, harvest, extraction, processing and use of products from Natural Resource Lands play an important role in King County's economy by providing jobs and products for local use and export. Natural Resource Lands also provide links to King County's cultural heritage, scenic views and environmental benefits such as enhanced air and water quality. In large measure, King County's quality of life is dependent upon the thoughtful planning and sound management of these Natural Resource Lands to ensure their long-term conservation and productive use.

For many years, King County's Natural Resource Lands were poorly conserved and managed. For example, only about one-third of the farmland existing in 1945 remains today. Lack of understanding of natural resource value, inconsistent coordination between agencies, poor operational practices, demand for more housing, lack of an adequate means to compensate natural resource owners for the many non-monetary values their lands provide and many other reasons have diminished our available natural resource lands.

Efforts to maintain King County's Natural Resource Lands and the industries they support began in earnest in the late 1970's. The land base and industries are further conserved by encouraging development to occur as envisioned by the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), which requires new development to be focused primarily in the Urban Growth Area. Under this plan, Natural Resource Lands, including Designated Production Districts and sites of long-term commercial significance, will have minimal new residential and commercial development. New development that does occur will be designed to be compatible with active resource-based uses.

This section contains King County's strategy for conservation of these valuable Natural Resource Lands and for encouraging their productive and sustainable management. The strategy consists of policies to guide planning, incentives, education and regulation. Forest, farm and mineral lands are not King County's only natural resources. Many other resource-based industries, such as the fisheries industry, are influenced by King County's land use and planning policies. Policies for the protection and enhancement of air, water, vegetation, fisheries, wildlife and other natural resources can be found in this chapter and in Chapter 4, Environment.

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# I. Rural Legacy

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## A. Maintaining Rural Lifestyle

### 1. Rural Area Designation Criteria and Rural Character

The criteria set forth in this section were used to draw the boundaries of the Rural Area designated by this Plan.

**R-101**

It is a fundamental objective of the King County Comprehensive Plan to maintain the character of its designated Rural Area. The GMA specifies the rural element of comprehensive plans include measures that apply to rural development and protect the rural character of the area (RCW 36.70A.070(5)). The GMA defines rural character (RCW 36.70A.030(14)). Rural development can consist of a variety of uses that are consistent with the preservation of rural character and the requirements of the rural element. Rural development does not refer to agriculture or forestry activities that may be conducted in rural areas (RCW 36.70A.030(15)). In order to implement GMA, it is necessary to define the development patterns that are considered rural, historical or traditional, and do not encourage urban growth or create pressure for urban facilities and service. Therefore, King County's land use regulations and development standards shall protect and enhance the following components of the Rural Area:

- a. The natural environment, particularly as evidenced by the health of wildlife and fisheries (especially salmon and trout), aquifers used for potable water, surface water bodies including Puget Sound and natural drainage systems and their riparian corridors;
- b. Commercial and non-commercial farming, forestry, fisheries, mining and cottage industries;
- c. Historic resources, historical character and continuity including archaeological and cultural sites important to tribes;
- d. Community small-town atmosphere, safety, and locally-owned small businesses;
- e. Economically and fiscally healthy rural cities and unincorporated towns and neighborhoods with clearly defined identities compatible with adjacent rural, agricultural, forestry and mining uses;
- f. Regionally significant parks, trails and open space;
- g. A variety of low-density housing choices compatible with adjacent farming, forestry and mining and not needing urban facilities and services; and
- h. Traditional rural land uses of a size and scale that blend with historic rural development.

**R-102**

The Rural Area designations shown on the King County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map include areas that are rural in character and meet one or more of the following criteria:

- a. **Opportunities exist for significant commercial or non-commercial farming and forestry (large-scale farms and forest lands are designated as Natural Resource Lands);**
- b. **The area will help buffer nearby Natural Resource Lands from conflicting urban uses;**
- c. **The area is contiguous to other lands in the Rural Area, Natural Resource Lands or large, predominantly environmentally sensitive areas;**
- d. **There are major physical barriers to providing urban services at reasonable cost, or such areas will help foster more logical boundaries for urban public services and infrastructure;**
- e. **The area is not needed for the foreseeable future that is, well beyond the 20-year forecast period to provide capacity for population or employment growth;**
- f. **The area has outstanding scenic, historic, environmental, resource or aesthetic values that can best be protected by a Rural Area designation; or**
- g. **Significant environmental constraints make the area generally unsuitable for intensive urban development.**

The Rural Area is comprised of all lands in King County outside of the designated Urban Growth Area (UGA), and not including the designated Forest and Agricultural Production Districts. The Rural Area is generally located east of the UGA, with the exception of the Rural Cities and their UGAs, and also includes the entirety of Vashon-Maury Islands. Within the Rural Area, three land use categories are applied: Rural, allowing low-density residential development, forestry, farming, and a range of traditional rural uses; Rural Town, recognizing historical settlement patterns and allowing commercial uses to serve rural residents; and Rural Neighborhood, allowing small-scale convenience services for nearby rural residents.

While the GMA, the Countywide Planning Policies and King County's policies and regulations call for protecting the Rural Area by limiting housing densities, there are many other features besides density that characterize the Rural Area. Some of the most important features include: integration of housing with traditional rural uses such as forestry, farming and keeping of livestock; protection of streams, wetlands and wildlife habitat; preservation of open vistas, wooded areas and scenic roadways; and reliance on minimal public services. King County is committed to maintaining these features as well, and the policies in this chapter call for continuing and expanding upon these efforts.

**R-103                      King County's Rural Area is considered to be permanent and shall not be redesignated to an Urban Growth Area until reviewed pursuant to the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.130(3) and Countywide Planning Policy FW-1.**

## **2. Rural Resources**

The Rural Area contains working farms and forests which contribute to healthy resource-based industries. For example, Rural Area forestlands provide an important part of rural character, add to the diversity and self-sufficiency of local economies and contribute to open space, wildlife habitat and environmental quality. However, Rural Area land in farm and forest use has significantly diminished since 1985, mostly through the conversion of these lands to residential uses. Pressures to convert from resource use include opportunities for significant profits based on alternative uses, and the encroachment of residential and other development that conflicts with the resource use.

Although most of King County's best farming and timberlands are within designated Resource Production Districts, there is a significant land base for agriculture and forestry in the Rural Area. King County has studied this land base and has identified Rural Forest areas where forestry will be enhanced and protected. Special efforts to conserve the forest land base in particular are necessary. Farming uses are adequately protected by rural zoning, but could be additionally supported by incentive programs and possibly the Transfer of Development Credits program.

- R-104** Farming and forestry are vital to the preservation of rural areas and should be encouraged throughout the Rural Area. King County should encourage the retention of existing and establishment of new rural resource-based uses, with appropriate site management that protects habitat resources. King County's regulation of farming and forestry in the Rural Area should be consistent with these guiding principles:
- a. Homeowner covenants for new subdivisions and short subdivisions in the Rural Area should not restrict farming and forestry;
  - b. Agricultural and silvicultural management practices should not be construed as public nuisances when carried on in compliance with applicable regulations, even though they may impact nearby residences; and
  - c. County environmental standards for forestry and agriculture should protect environmental quality, especially in relation to water and fisheries resources, while encouraging forestry and farming.
- R-105** Uses related to and appropriate for the Rural Area include those relating to farming, forestry, mineral extraction, and fisheries such as the raising of livestock, growing of crops, sale of agricultural products produced on-site; small-scale cottage industries; and recreational uses that rely on a rural location are also appropriate.
- R-106** King County recognizes and supports cottage industries that provide services to rural residents and are part of traditional rural economic activities and lifestyles found in King County's Rural Area. The county shall review its regulations and programs to preserve this component of the County's Rural Area. The Executive shall provide this analysis of the regulations and programs for review by the King County Council by December 31, 2001.

In 1995, King County worked with citizens and property owners to identify rural lands that were currently being farmed, and rural lands that remained in a relatively forested state or were appropriate for small-scale forestry uses. The lands were designated as Rural Farm Districts and Rural Forest Districts, respectively. The King County Comprehensive Plan called for using regulations and incentives to maintain land in the Districts in large parcels, and to maintain and encourage continued farming and forestry activities. The 1996 Farm and Forest Report recommended a series of actions to protect the rural farm and forest land base as well as the practices of farming and forestry, including the provision of technical assistance to aid property owners in land management, outreach to owners of properties vulnerable to development, creating opportunities for property owners to sell their development rights, and seeking funding for public acquisition of rural resource lands. The report also recommended the continuance of the King County Agricultural Commission, and the appointment of a Rural Forest Commission to review the impact of proposed regulations on rural forestry and recommend incentive programs.

## **B. Forestry in the Rural Area**

Since 1996, King County has been actively implementing the recommendations of the Rural Farm and Forest Report through the Rural Forestry Program. Throughout the Rural Area, King County encourages small-scale forestry and land stewardship through a variety of land owner incentive and community-based programs that:

- a. Promote forest stewardship through educational and technical assistance, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Incentive Program, the Department of Natural Resources and the King County Cooperative Extension Forest Stewardship Programs;
- b. Provide technical assistance and information to landowner groups and community associations seeking to implement land/water stewardship, habitat restoration and management plans;

- c. Create opportunities and incentives for voluntary, cooperative management of woodlots and open space currently in separate ownership;
- d. Offer technical assistance and information to landowners who are interested in managing their forest for non-timber specialty forest products; and
- e. Explore opportunities for providing relief from special levies and assessments.

**R-107                      The preservation of forest land and forestry throughout the Rural Area shall remain a priority for King County. Landowner incentive programs, technical assistance, permit assistance, regulatory actions and community based education shall be used throughout the Rural Area to sustain the forest land base and forestry activities.**

The Rural Forest Program will continue to evaluate additional ways to conserve rural resource lands and encourage forestry. In addition, King County has identified properties for acquisition, and has worked in partnership with other jurisdictions and citizen groups to match high priority sites with funding sources for permanent conservation. As of 2000, King County has purchased two significant forest properties, the 1700-acre Taylor Mountain Forest and the 320-acre Ring Hill Forest. The 313-acre Mitchell Hill Forest has been permanently preserved through the transfer of development credits from Mitchell Hill to the Urban Area. Numerous other rural forest sites have been qualified as transfer of development sending sites.

The Rural Forest Commission was appointed in 1998, and continues to work diligently to develop new funding and incentive ideas for forest conservation. The Commission recommended the Rural Forest Districts be refined to provide a focus to those areas where the greatest opportunities exist for retention of large, contiguous blocks of forest, and that these areas be called "Rural Forest Focus Areas." The Rural Forest Focus Areas replace the Rural Forest Districts.

While economic incentive programs and technical assistance are available to all property owners in the Rural Area interested in pursuing small-scale forestry, special efforts to maintain forest cover and the practice of sustainable forestry are warranted where there are opportunities to sustain large, contiguous blocks of rural forest. The Agricultural and Forest Lands map identifies such areas as Rural Forest Focus Areas, and notes the locations and boundaries of each Focus Area.

**R-108                      Rural Forest Focus Areas are identified geographic areas where special efforts are necessary and feasible to maintain forest cover and the practice of sustainable forestry. King County shall target funding, when available, new economic incentive programs, regulatory actions and additional technical assistance to the identified Rural Forest Focus Areas. Strategies specific to each Rural Forest Focus Area shall be developed, employing the combination of incentive and technical assistance programs best suited to each Focus Area.**

**R-109                      The Rural Forest Focus Areas should be maintained in parcels of 20 acres or more in order to retain large, contiguous blocks of rural forest. Regulations or incentives should seek to achieve a maximum density of one home per 20 acres.**

## **C. Farming in the Rural Area**

The 1996 Farm and Forest Report provided a series of strategies for conserving farmland and sustaining farming within the designated Agricultural Production District where the prime agricultural soils are found, and recognized that there are also areas outside the APD where meaningful agricultural practices continue. The Report identified areas where lands were in dairy or crop production and enrolled in the current use taxation program, determined that the low-density zoning in place in these areas was sufficient to protect the land base, and recommended that landowner incentive programs be focussed there as well.

- R-110**                      **The County should develop specific incentives to encourage agricultural activities in the remaining prime farmlands located outside the Agricultural Production District. These incentives could include tax credits, expedited permit review, reduced permit fees, permit exemptions for activities complying with Best Management Practices, assistance with agricultural waste management or similar programs.**

## **D. Equestrian Communities**

King County recognizes the contributions of equestrian livestock husbandry, training, competition and recreation activities to the overall rural quality of life in King County. As growth occurs, open land to sustain livestock and existing or potential trail segments may be lost to uncoordinated land development and road improvements. Also, ESA requirements may limit livestock management choices and the location of new equestrian facilities on land constrained by large riparian corridors.

The Equestrian Community designation in the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan is based on the presence of some or all these factors in portions of King County's Rural Areas:

- a. Proximity to a regional-level trail, designated by the State of Washington, King County or a city, that is accessible to horses;
- b. Tracts of land on which horseback riding is formally sanctioned or to which equestrian access traditionally has been granted;
- c. Concentrations of residential lots or acreage on which horses are kept;
- d. Commercial or noncommercial stables, riding schools and arenas;
- e. Supporting industries including but not limited to tack shops, feed stores or veterinarians; and
- f. Riding or homeowner associations that promote equestrian activities.

While equestrian uses are permitted throughout the Rural Area, the "Equestrian Communities" map identifies those areas where continued equestrian uses are particularly supported and provides a way for rural communities and the county to coordinate various actions to help equestrian activities remain sustainable in King County.

- R-111**                      **King County should support the identified Equestrian Communities in the Rural Area by providing facilities on King County rights-of-way where not in conflict with the terms of utility easements to accommodate horse travel, by maintaining equestrian links, including multiple-use trails, where appropriate, and by adoption of supportive land use regulations for use of these areas for horse-keeping. King County will work with local communities to identify and protect multiple use trails in the identified Equestrian Communities that support horse travel within the Rural Area.**

- R-112**                      **Soft-surface multiple-use trails in corridors separate from road rights-of-way are the preferred option for equestrian travel for safety reasons and to avoid conflicts with residential activities associated with the street. Existing off-road trails should be preserved during site development, with relocation as appropriate to accommodate development while maintaining trail connections. The King County Road Design Standards shall be revised, with input from representatives of the equestrian community, to accommodate safe equestrian travel within road rights-of-way. Where appropriate, capital improvement programs for transportation and park facilities shall also enable the use of new facilities by equestrians. Construction standards for multiple-use non-motorized trails to be established in road rights-of-way within identified Equestrian Communities should assure a minimum eight-foot-wide gravel shoulder, or provide a trail separated from the driving lanes by a ditch or other barrier. Construction standards for soft-surface multiple-use non-motorized trails in corridors separate from road rights-of-way shall**

be consistent with current trail construction and maintenance practices as promulgated by the U.S. Forest Service.

- R-113** King County's land use regulations should protect equestrian uses throughout the Rural area by supporting preservation of equestrian trail links in identified Equestrian Communities, protection of livestock from intrusions from residential development, and encouraging subdivision layouts that preserve opportunities for keeping of horses. Representatives of the equestrian community shall review and monitor regulatory and programmatic actions by King County, such as rural area development regulations, that have the potential to affect equestrian uses.
- R-114** Equestrian trails should be recognized as "linear parks" for purposes of the county's Public Benefit Rating System.
- R-115** County departments negotiating trades or sales of county land shall determine whether any historically established trails exist on the property, and assure that those trails are retained or replaced to assure that key linkages to regional systems are not lost as a condition of the trade or sale.



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## II. Rural Densities and Development

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### A. Rural Growth Target and Capacity

While the GMA requires most new growth to be accommodated in Urban Growth Areas, growth may be permitted outside the UGA provided it is not urban in character.

The Rural Area is not expected to accommodate large amounts of growth, but allows for low-density residential development and other traditional rural uses. The GMA requires that rural development be contained and controlled to ensure the protection of rural character, assure the visual compatibility of rural development with the surrounding rural area, protect environmentally sensitive areas and habitat and protect against conflicts with natural resource uses such as farming, forestry and mining. To emphasize the need to reduce the rate of growth in the Rural Area, the Countywide Planning Policies established a rural target of 5800 to 8200 new homes over the 20-year period of 1992 to 2012. For modeling purposes, this growth was distributed among community planning areas as shown in the following table. Since that time, growth in many of the planning areas has already exceed the “targets” for the year 2012. Estimated new dwelling units built since 1993 are shown in the table as well.

#### Household Projected and Actual Growth by Rural Subarea

Subarea	New Household Growth “Target” Projection 1992-2012	Actual Dwelling Unit Growth 1993-2000
Northshore	200-300	179
Bear Creek	1,400-1,800	1675
East Sammamish	800-1,100	161
Newcastle	300-500	269
Snoqualmie & East King County	900-1,400	1337
Tahoma/Raven Heights & Soos Creek	1,650-2,200	1404
Enumclaw	250-350	455
Vashon	300-500	594

Growth by Water Resource Inventory Area has occurred during the same time period as follows:

Water Resource Inventory Area	DU Permits Issued 1/93-6/00
WRIA 7 (Snoqualmie)	2027
WRIA 8 (Cedar/Sammamish)	2290
WRIA 9 (Duwamish/Green)	1061
WRIA 10 (Puyallup/White)	102
WRIA 15 (Vashon/Maury Island)	594

When the target was established in 1992, it was recognized that the capacity of the Rural Area exceeded the target. In fact, the number of existing legal building lots exceeded the target. In addition, the target

did not fully account for the many subdivision applications that had been vested in the late 1980's. In 1992, 1200 new building permits were issued in the Rural Area, and in 1993, the number dropped to 1000 new building permits. Many of these building permits were issued for the lots created by the vested subdivisions. Since adoption of the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan, annual building permit activity in the Rural Area has further dropped to an average of approximately 850 new building permits per year. Application of new zoning measures and other regulatory tools have also helped to reduce subdivision activity, but if the current rate of 850 new homes per year continues, the Rural Area could be built out to its full capacity within 15 to 20 years of the date of this Plan.

As of 1999, the current estimate of buildable, vacant lots in the Rural Area is approximately 10,000. Zoning regulations allow for creation of additional lots at densities of one home per 5 acres to one home per 20 acres. Additional reductions in zoned densities or increased standards are potential measures to reduce creation of additional lots in the Rural Area. In addition, new subdivisions in the Rural Area are subject to concurrency review for road adequacy. Due to the rate of build-out in the Rural Area, and limitations on the County's ability to finance road improvements for the Urban Area, proposed Rural Area subdivisions are beginning to fail transportation concurrency tests. This indicates that rural growth is continuing at a rate that cannot be supported by intended public infrastructure investment. The Growth Management Act requires that a jurisdiction re-assess its land use provisions when concurrency cannot be achieved.

While the application of lower density zoning or more restrictive standards could reduce the creation of new lots, there are limited opportunities to address development of existing legal lots. One measure that would slow the growth rate on existing lots would be the establishment of an annual limit on the number of building permits to be issued in the Rural Area. This alternative would be more palatable if it were linked to a transfer of development rights program or a development rights purchase program.

#### **R-201**

**A low growth rate is desirable for the Rural Area, including Rural Towns, to prevent sprawl and the overburdening of rural services, reduce the need for capital expenditures for rural roads, maintain rural character and protect the environment. Since the initial 1994 adoption of the Comprehensive Plan pursuant to the Growth Management Act, new household growth in the Rural Area has rapidly approached the 20-year growth target range of 5,800 to 8,200 net new households. King County must focus its resources on the Urban Area. All possible tools may be used to limit growth in the Rural Area. Appropriate tools include land use designations, development regulations, level-of-service standards and incentives.**

## **B. Residential Densities**

The low-density residential living choices available in the Rural Area provide an important part of the variety of housing options for King County residents. The residential land use policies in this section, together with their implementing regulations, strike a balance between making rural housing available to those who desire a rural way of life and keeping densities and the number of housing units low enough so they can be supported by a rural level of public facilities and services, be compatible with nearby commercial and non-commercial farming and forestry and prevent or significantly reduce adverse impacts of development on the natural environment. These policies and implementing regulations could allow 14,000 to 24,000 more housing units at ultimate buildout in addition to the roughly 58,000 residences existing in the designated Rural Area in 2000. The Transfer of Development Credits Program will help reduce development capacity in the Rural Area, and King County should continue to seek other programs that provide incentives for property owners to limit development of their land.

- R-202**                      **Residential development in the Rural Area should occur as follows:**
- a.        In Rural Towns at a variety of densities and housing types, compatible with maintenance of historic resources and community character; and**
  - b.        Outside Rural Towns at low densities compatible with traditional rural character and uses, farming, forestry, mining and rural service levels.**

The use of land and the density of development (measured as the number of homes or other structures per acre or per square mile of land) are key determinants and contributors to the character of the Rural Area, as described above in Section A. While human settlement of King County's Rural Area has a wide variety of uses and densities, both the historical and desirable range of uses and densities defined here are necessarily narrower and less intense than that found in the Urban Area. Residential development at very low densities (including the land for accessory uses, on-site sewage disposal and local water supply) consumes or will consume most of the land in the Rural Area. Residential density may be the single, most important factor in protecting or destroying rural character that can be influenced by government policies and regulations.

Low overall densities in the Rural Area will be achieved through very large minimum lot sizes or limited clustering at the same average densities when facilities and services permit (for example, soil conditions allow on-site sewage disposal on smaller lots). The Rural Area cannot be a significant source of affordable housing for King County residents, but it will contain diverse housing opportunities through a mix of large lots, clustering, existing smaller lots and higher densities in rural cities and Rural Towns, as services permit.

Future development in the Rural Area will, to a great extent, be controlled by the availability of transportation concurrency. Concurrency certificates are issued only to proposed developments that meet strict level of service standards. In the Rural Area, this standard is an average volume/capacity ratio of 0.69 during the afternoon peak period. Many of the traffic zones in the Rural Area are near or already out of compliance; therefore proposed subdivisions are being denied concurrency certificates. In the Transportation Chapter, policies T-205, 206 and 220 prevent the construction of road projects in the Rural Area for the purpose of increasing road capacity, meaning that these zones will remain out of compliance.

- R-203**                      **The Rural Area should have low residential densities that can be sustained by minimal infrastructure improvements such as septic systems and rural roads, cause minimal environmental degradation and impacts to significant historic resources, and that will not cumulatively create the future necessity or expectation of urban levels of services. Concurrency certificates for proposed new subdivisions in the Rural Area shall not be issued if trips generated by such subdivisions would exceed rural transportation level-of-service standards.**

- R-204**                      **Rural area residential densities shall be applied in accordance with Policies R-205 – R-209. Individual zone reclassifications are discouraged and should**

**not be allowed in the Rural Area. Property owners seeking individual zone reclassifications should demonstrate compliance with R-205 through R-209.**

Although King County designated Resource Lands and zoned extensive portions of its territory as Agricultural Production Districts or Forestry Production, very low residential densities adjacent to Resource Lands are essential to minimize land use conflicts. In addition, a significant part of the Rural Area land base is still used for farming or forestry uses. Therefore, suitability of lands for continuing resource uses and proximity to designated Natural Resource Lands will be important considerations in applying the lower rural densities.

**R-205                    A residential density of one home per 20 acres or 10 acres shall be achieved through regulatory and incentive programs on lands in the Rural Area that are managed for forestry or farming respectively, and are found to qualify for a Rural Forest Focus Area designation in accordance with Policy R-108.**

**R-206                    A residential density of one home per 10 acres shall be applied in the Rural Area where:**

- a.            The lands are adjacent to or within one-quarter mile of designated Agricultural Production Districts, the Forest Production District or legally approved long-term mineral resource extraction sites; or**
- b.            The lands contain significant environmentally constrained areas as defined by County ordinance, policy or federal or state law, or regionally significant resource areas or substantial critical habitat as determined by legislatively-approved Basin Plans or Watershed Resource Inventory Area Plans; and**
- c.            The predominant lot size is greater than or equal to 10 acres but less than 20 acres in size.**

**R-207                    For Vashon-Maury Island, a residential density of one home per 10 acres:**

- a.            Shall be maintained on areas zoned RA-10 as of 1994 to help protect community character and reduce adverse impacts on the island's infrastructure; and**
- b.            Shall be applied to areas with a predominant lot size of 10 acres or greater and identified on the Areas Highly Susceptible to Groundwater Contamination Map.**

The Areas Highly Susceptible to Groundwater Contamination map is located in Chapter 4, Environment.

**R-208                    A residential density of one home per 5 acres shall be applied in the Rural Area where**

- a.            The land is physically suitable for development with minimal environmentally sensitive features or critical habitat as determined by legislatively adopted watershed based plans;**
- b.            Development can be supported by rural services;**
- c.            The land does not meet the criteria in this plan for lower density designations; and**
- d.            The predominant lot size is less than 10 acres.**

Although King County intends to retain low residential densities in the Rural Area, residential development has occurred in the past on a wide variety of lot sizes. Both existing homes on small lots and rural infill on vacant, small lots contribute to the variety of housing choices in the Rural Area. In some cases, however, rural-level facilities and services (e.g. on-site sewage disposal, individual water supply systems) may not permit development of the smallest vacant lots. The effect of Policy R-209 is to recognize that some of the Rural Area has already been subdivided at a density greater than one lot per five acres (for example, parts of the shoreline of Vashon Island), but not to allow more than one home per 5 acres on unplatted acreage. Zoning to implement policies R-206 through R-209 has been applied through subarea and local plans and area zoning maps.

**R-209**                    **The RA-2.5 zone has generally been applied to rural areas with an existing pattern of lots below five acres in size that were created prior to the adoption of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. These smaller lots may still be developed individually or combined, provided that applicable standards for sewage disposal, environmental protection, water supply, roads and rural fire protection can be met. A subdivision at a density of one home per 2.5 acres shall only be permitted through the transfer of development credits from property in the designated Rural Forest Focus Areas. The site receiving the density must be approved as a Transfer of Development Credits receiving site in accordance with the King County Code. Properties on Vashon-Maury Islands shall not be eligible as receiving sites.**

Accessory dwelling units provide opportunities for affordable housing, on-site housing for workers and caretakers, housing for extended family members, and rental income for landowners. However, detached accessory dwelling units function similarly to separate homes on separate lots, and should be treated as such. When a subdivision is proposed for a property that already has a house and a detached accessory dwelling unit, the house and accessory dwelling unit shall count as two units. For example, on an RA-5 zoned 20 acre parcel, which could be subdivided into four lots, the existing primary dwelling and the accessory unit in a separate building shall count as two of the four units allowed on the site.

**R-210**                    **Accessory dwelling units in structures detached from the primary dwelling shall be counted as a separate dwelling unit for the purpose of lot calculations under the zoning in place at the time of a proposed subdivision.**

**R-211**                    **The King County Residential Density Incentive Program shall not be available for development in the Rural zones.**

### **C. Transfer of Development Credits Program**

The Growth Management Act encourages the use of innovative techniques for land use management. King County has a long tradition of using innovative techniques, including programs promoting transfers of development credits, to achieve land management goals such as those stated above.

To that end, King County promotes the transfer of development rights, or “credits,” from land valuable to the public, especially rural and resource areas, to land better able to accommodate growth. The Transfer of Development Credits (TDC) Program allows landowners to voluntarily achieve an economic return on their property while maintaining it in forestry, farming, habitat or parks and open space in perpetuity. It also increases housing opportunities in the Urban Area where urban services and infrastructure can accommodate additional growth.

**R-212**                    **As an innovative means to permanently preserve lands with countywide public benefit, to encourage higher densities in appropriate areas and reduce residential development capacity in Rural Forest Focus Areas, King County shall continue efforts to implement an effective and focused transfer of density program.**

**R-213**                    **The primary intent of the Transfer of Development Credits Program is to reduce development in the Rural Area by encouraging the transfer of development credits from rural lands into the Urban Growth Area. Transfers may also be made among rural sites in some cases.**

**R-214**                    **King County supports and shall work actively to facilitate the transfer of development credits to:**

- a.        Preserve the rural environment, encourage retention of resource-based uses and reduce service demands in the Rural Area;**
- b.        Provide permanent protection to significant natural resources; and**

**c. Increase the regional open space system.**

The key to a successful transfer of development credits program is the availability of and market for “receiving sites” for development credits. In 1997, King County completed a study examining potential receiving areas in the Urban Area, in rural cities and towns, and also in rural areas where the existing pattern of lots is smaller than five acres in size. The study found there are some unincorporated urban areas that could be suitable to receive development credits, and that most of the more intensely-developed rural areas were not appropriate for additional density due to physical, environmental and infrastructure constraints. The study also concluded that the participation of incorporated cities as receiving areas is essential to the success of a TDC program in King County.

King County Code 21A.36 provides the detailed rules for private property owner to private property owner transfers of development credits. Transfers of development credits are permitted from rural unincorporated areas to urban unincorporated areas. Transfers from urban unincorporated areas to other urban unincorporated land are also permitted to provide an incentive to protect environmentally-sensitive urban land or urban lands valuable to the open space system.

King County has also authorized a pilot program to test additional ways to facilitate transfers of development credits, including the creation of a County-managed TDC bank to buy and then sell credits, developing interlocal agreements with cities willing to accept transfers of development credits, and the allowance for transfers from rural or resource lands to other rural lands. The details of these transfer rules are found in King County Code 21A.55. The two code sections will be consolidated to incorporate the most successful transfer of development credit techniques following evaluation of the pilot program.

- R-215** To promote transfers of development credits, King County shall facilitate the transfer of credits from private property owners with sending sites to private property owners with receiving sites, buy and sell development credits through the King County Transfer of Development Credits (TDC) Bank, and work with cities to develop interlocal agreements that encourage transfers of development credits into cities and, within adopted appropriations. Public amenity funding to enhance the livability of neighborhoods accepting increased densities should also be part of the program. King County should actively solicit large landowners, within receiving areas, to purchase density credits from within the established bank.
- R-216** Properties qualified as sending sites shall provide a permanently protected area of sufficient size to provide public benefit. Priority candidates for sending sites are:
- a. Lands contributing to the protection of endangered and threatened species;
  - b. Rural Forest Focus Areas;
  - c. Lands that are suitable for inclusion in and provide important links to the regional open space system, including lands with historical or cultural significance; or
  - d. Agricultural and Forest Production District lands.
- R-217** Transfers of development credits may be made to receiving sites as follows:
- Receiving Sites:**
- a. Rural areas zoned RA-5 and RA-2.5 may receive transfers of development credits transfers from the Rural Forest Focus Areas.
  - b. Unincorporated urban areas and incorporated cities may receive transfers of development credit. Preferences should be given for locations within designated Urban Centers, or adjacent to transit stations and park and ride lots. Transfers to incorporated areas shall be detailed in an interlocal agreement between the city and county.

- R-218**                      **Development Credit Calculations**
- a.            Portions of urban sending sites that are located within stream, wetland or steep slope sensitive areas and their buffers may only transfer development credits at a discounted rate.
  - b.            Development credits transferred from Rural Forest Focus Areas to the Urban Area shall be calculated on a basis of 1 credit for each 5 acres of site area.
  - c.            If a portion of a sending site is being retained for development, the subsequent development must be clustered, and the tract preserved with a permanent conservation easement shall be larger than the developed portion. In the case of lands within the Rural Forest Focus Areas, no more than one dwelling unit per 20 acres shall be retained, and the tract preserved with a conservation easement shall be at least 15 acres in size.
- R-219**                      **DEED RECORDING.** Following the transfer of development credits from a sending site, deed restrictions documenting the transfers shall be recorded and notice placed on the title to the sending site parcel. A conservation easement shall be required and shall be documented by a map indicating the portion of the sending site permanently restricted from future development.
- R-220**                      King County should increase funding to the TDC bank and seek private and other public funding to strengthen the TDC program and facilitate the transfer of development credits from the Rural Area in order to preserve the rural environment, encourage retention of rural resource-based uses and avoid urban/suburban service demands in the Rural Area. A bond or levy proposal for public funding of a development rights purchase program would be appropriate and should be pursued. Rights purchased through such a program could be sold into any appropriate urban location.

## **D. Nonresidential Uses**

While low-density residential development, farming and forestry are the primary uses in the Rural Area, some compatible public and private uses are appropriate and contribute to rural character. Compatible uses might include small, neighborhood churches, feed and grain stores, and home occupations such as small day care facilities or veterinary services. In addition, it may be necessary to locate some public facilities in rural areas, such as utility installations that serve rural homes. Any allowed nonresidential uses should be designed to blend with rural residential development and resource uses.

- R-221**                      **Nonresidential uses in the Rural area shall be limited to those that:**
- a.            Provide convenient local services for nearby residents; or
  - b.            Require location in a Rural area; or
  - c.            Support natural resource-based industries; or
  - d.            Provide adaptive reuse of significant historic resources; or
  - e.            Provide recreational opportunities that are compatible with the surrounding Rural Area.

These uses shall be sited, sized and landscaped to complement rural character as defined in policy R-101, prevent impacts to the environment and function with rural services including on-site wastewater disposal.

- R-222**                      Golf facilities shall be permitted when located outside of Rural Forest Focus Areas, Regionally Significant Resource Areas and Locally Significant Resource Areas, as a conditional use, in the RA-2.5 and RA-5 zones.

The service area of most schools in the Rural Area is large and relatively sparsely populated. Placing schools in rural cities or Rural Towns allows them to be served with urban-level utilities and fire protection and to be used efficiently for other community activities.

- R-223** In the Rural Area, elementary schools may locate where required to serve neighborhoods. New middle/junior high schools and high schools and school facilities are encouraged to locate in rural cities or unincorporated Rural Towns. In reviewing proposals for middle/junior high and high schools and school facilities outside rural cities or Rural Towns, King County should ensure that any approved project will not stimulate local demand for urban-level services. In order to support the availability of public facilities and services for educational purposes, public schools and public school facilities may exceed nonresidential development standards as provided for by county code, shall comply at a minimum with applicable surface water design manual standards and may be provided with public sewer services in accordance with Policy F-242.
- R-224** Small airfields beyond those already established in the Rural Area should not be permitted, due to their cumulative impacts on air traffic and nearby uses.
- R-225** Library services for the Rural Area should be provided by bookmobiles, or by libraries in Rural Towns or rural cities.

## **E. Character/Development Standards**

The aesthetic qualities and character of the Rural Area depend on a combination of factors, including low densities; a high ratio of undeveloped or undisturbed soil and natural or crop vegetation to development, such as roads and structures; historic buildings and landscapes; and minimal development standards, public facilities and services beyond those needed for environmental protection and basic public health and safety.

- R-226** New subdivisions in the Rural Area should strive to maintain the size and scale of traditional development patterns and rural character.
- R-227** New subdivisions in the Rural Area should be designed and developed to maximize preservation of existing forest cover and native vegetation, and to minimize impervious surfaces within individual lots and in the subdivision as a whole. King County shall develop additional site design standards for new subdivisions that further reduce the impacts of new homes in the Rural Area on the natural environment, resource uses and other adjacent land uses.
- R-228** Site design standards for new subdivisions in the Rural Area should include: minimization of paved surfaces; limitations on entrance signage; preservation of natural contours, existing meadows and opportunities for keeping of horses; and other standards to limit features typical of urban or suburban development.
- R-229** Rural residential development adjacent to Agricultural and Forest Production Districts shall be sited to minimize interference with activities related to resource uses. Residences next to Forest Production Districts shall be built with greater setbacks from the Forest Production District boundaries for safety and to reduce nuisance complaints.
- R-230** To maintain traditional rural development patterns and assure continued opportunities for resource activities in the Rural Area, large lot development is preferred in the Rural Area. Clustering of lots is permitted when:



- a. The development provides equal or greater protection of the natural environment, Natural Resource Lands, historic resources or archaeological sites;
- b. Clusters are limited in size to be compatible with surrounding large lots or nearby agricultural and forestry uses;
- c. The clustered development is offset with a permanent resource land tract preserved for forestry or agriculture, as designated by the owner at time of subdivision or short subdivision, or a permanent open space tract. Under no circumstances shall the tract be reserved for future development; and
- d. The development can be served by rural facility and service levels (such as on-site sewage disposal and rural fire protection).

Low-density development in the Rural Area will have different residential street needs from those in the Urban Growth Area. Densities and travel demand in the Rural Area are very low and road maintenance is a proportionately greater per capita cost than in the Urban Growth Area.

Rural streets and roads outside Rural Towns generally will have no more than two travel lanes, no curbs or sidewalks and feature unpaved shoulders and open drainage ditches. Local access streets for residential subdivisions will constitute a significant proportion of the site disturbance and impervious surface associated with new development in the Rural Area and therefore must take the environment into consideration equally with traffic flow and vehicular access.

**R-231 Rural development standards shall be established to protect the natural environment by addressing seasonal and maximum clearing limits, impervious surface limits, surface water management standards that emphasize preservation of natural drainage systems and water quality, ground water protection, and resource-based practices. These standards should be designed to provide appropriate exceptions for lands that are to be developed for kindergarten through twelfth grade public schools and school facilities, provided that the school project shall comply at a minimum with the requirements of the King County Surface Water Design Manual.**

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# III. Rural Public Facilities and Service

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The policies below set forth King County's general approach to providing services and setting facility standards for the Rural Area and provide guidance for siting those facilities that require Rural Area locations. See Chapter Six, Transportation, and Chapter Seven, Facilities and Utilities, for more detailed policies on specific facilities and services such as roads, on-site sewage treatment and disposal systems and water supply.

In order to focus growth within the Urban Growth Area, financial resources must be prioritized to develop and maintain sufficient urban infrastructure and services in the UGA to accommodate that growth. Further, the presence of a high level of public infrastructure and services has been demonstrated to create pressure for new growth. For example, the taxpayer-supported road network constructed in eastern King County over the last twenty to thirty years has been the greatest source of growth pressure in the rural and natural resources area. To use financial resources efficiently and reduce growth pressure in the Rural Area, King County will not provide an urban level of infrastructure and services to the Rural Area. Chapter 6, Transportation and Chapter 7, Facilities and Utilities, clarify King County priorities for transportation and other facility improvements in the rural and natural resource areas.

- R-301**                      **King County shall work with cities and other agencies providing services to the Rural Area to adopt standards for facilities and services in the Rural Area that protect basic public health and safety and the environment, but are financially supportable at rural densities and do not encourage urban development.**
- R-302**                      **Public spending priorities for facilities and services within the Rural Area should be as follows:**
- a.        First, to maintain existing facilities and services that protect public health and safety; and**
  - b.        Second, to upgrade facilities and services when needed to correct rural service level deficiencies without unnecessarily creating additional capacity for new growth.**
- R-303**                      **Outside the Urban Growth Area, improvements to the transportation system by King County and Washington State to serve the Rural Area shall be limited to improvements needed for safety and environmental quality. Improvements to existing interstate or state highways, or King County roads in the Rural Area that provide connections between Urban Areas in the county, and new connections between portions of King County's contiguous Urban Growth Area that must traverse the Rural Area and are identified in an adopted transportation plan or policy, shall be designed to avoid pressure to convert to urban uses.**

Safety improvements may include such projects as redesign of dangerous intersections or structural improvements to bridges. Increased load-bearing pavement may be needed for routes supporting heavy

trucks used to haul logs or mineral resources. Adding lanes or urban-level traffic signals to roads outside the Urban Growth Area, however, would exceed the standards called for by Policy R-303.

**R-304**

**In the Rural Area, standards and plans for utility service should be consistent with long-term, low-density development and resource industries. Utility facilities that serve the Urban Growth Area but must be located in the Rural Area (for example, a pipeline from a municipal watershed) should be designed, and scaled to serve primarily the Urban Growth Area. Sewers needed to serve previously established urban “islands”, rural cities or Rural Towns or new or existing public schools or public school facilities, shall be tightlined and have access restrictions precluding service to the Rural Area.**

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## **IV. Rural Cities, Towns and Neighborhoods**

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Rural cities and unincorporated Rural Towns within the Rural Area contribute to variety in development patterns and housing choices and provide employment opportunities, retail shopping and other services to nearby residents. These cities and towns also contain a significant portion of King County's historic architecture and are the primary locations for nonresidential uses in the Rural Area. Rural King County also contains several small Rural Neighborhoods, which provide limited, local convenience shopping.

### **A. Rural Cities**

King County's rural cities are incorporated areas whose local governments are involved in the region's planning processes on an equal legal basis with the suburban cities and Seattle. The incorporated rural cities are Black Diamond, Carnation, Duvall, Enumclaw, North Bend, Skykomish and Snoqualmie.

The Growth Management Act stipulates that rural cities and their Urban Growth Areas are to be treated as part of the Urban Growth Area. The Countywide Planning Policies also provide for urban land uses and densities and urban services in those locations. Excessive growth in rural cities and Rural Towns, however, may create pressure for extending urban services (for example, roads) across the Rural Area or Natural Resource Lands, may increase conversion pressure on nearby Natural Resource Lands and adversely affect rural character. Therefore, King County views rural cities as qualitatively different from the Urban Growth Area as a whole, even though they may provide significant opportunities for residential or employment growth.

King County has worked with the rural cities to establish Urban Growth Areas to accommodate growth. These areas are shown as part of the Urban Growth Area on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map.

**R-401**                      **The rural, incorporated cities and their Urban Growth Areas shall be considered part of the Urban Growth Area for purposes of planning land uses and facility needs. King County should work with rural cities to encourage the provision of affordable housing, to minimize the impacts of new development on the surrounding rural land and to plan for growth consistent with long-term protection of significant historic resources, the surrounding Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands.**

**R-402**                      **Within Rural City Urban Growth Areas, the following uses shall be permitted until the area annexes to the city:**

- a.       Residential development at a density of 1 home per 5 acres or less with mandatory clustering; and**
- b.       Non residential development such as commercial and industrial as determined through previous subarea plans.**

## **B. Rural Towns**

Rural Towns are unincorporated towns governed directly by King County, but may provide a focal point for community groups such as chambers of commerce or community councils to participate in public affairs.

The purposes of the Rural Town designation are to recognize existing concentrations of higher density and economic activity in Rural Areas, whether by virtue of historical rural settlements or redesignation of an urban commercial center; provide a physical focus for the historic identity of rural communities; and to allow for modest growth of residential and economic uses within these designations if supported by the community and adequate utilities and other public services are available.

Although higher density development in Rural Towns may require public sewers, applying the full range of urban development standards (e.g. for street improvements or landscaping) may not be necessary, and may not be consistent with the historic character of these communities. Although Rural Towns also may in some circumstances develop at densities similar to those in the Urban Growth Area or in rural cities, they are considered part of the Rural Area for purposes of the GMA, do not provide significant growth capacity, and are not subject to the growth targets adopted for the UGA

**R-403**                      **King County hereby designates the Rural Towns of Fall City, Snoqualmie Pass and the Town of Vashon as unincorporated Rural Towns. These historical settlements in unincorporated King County should provide services and a range of housing choices for Rural Area residents. The boundaries of the designated Rural Towns are shown on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map. Adjustments to these boundaries shall only occur through a subarea planning process, and shall not allow significant increases in development potential or environmental impacts. No new Rural Towns are needed to serve the Rural Area.**

**R-404**                      **Commercial and industrial development that provides employment, shopping, and community and human services that strengthen the fiscal and economic health of rural communities should locate in Rural Towns if utilities and other services permit.**

**R-405**                      **Rural Towns may contain higher density housing than permitted in the surrounding Rural Area, and should provide affordable and resource-worker housing if utilities and other services permit. Development density in Rural Towns may approach that achieved in Rural Cities.**

The policies in this section apply only to the unincorporated Rural Towns. King County encourages rural cities to adopt land use policies and development standards that protect and enhance their historical character.

**R-406**                      **Rural Towns serve as activity centers for the Rural Area and may be served by range of utilities and services, and may include several or all of the following land uses, if supported by necessary utilities and other services and if scaled and designed to protect rural character:**

- a.        Retail, commercial and industrial uses to serve the surrounding Rural Area population and to provide support for resource industries and tourism;**
- b.        Residential development, including single family housing on small lots as well as multifamily housing and mixed-use developments;**
- c.        Other commercial and industrial uses, including commercial recreation and light industry; and**
- d.        Public facilities and services such as community services, churches, schools, and fire stations.**

**R-407** Sewers may be allowed in rural towns if necessary to solve existing water quality and public health problems which cannot be addressed by other methods, provided that any extension of sewer mains from urban areas to serve a rural town shall be tightlined systems designed to not serve any intervening lands. All alternatives shall be exhausted before sewers may be allowed. Rural towns shall not be enlarged to facilitate provision of sewers.

Rural and urban residents alike value the historic character of King County's Rural Towns. New development can enhance the character and valuable features of Rural Towns through careful design and location.

**R-408** Rural Towns should be compact, promoting pedestrian and non-motorized travel while permitting automobile access to most commercial and industrial uses. New development should be designed to strengthen the desirable characteristics and the historic character of the town, be supported by necessary public facilities and services, and be compatible with historic resources and nearby rural or resource uses. New industrial uses should locate where they do not disrupt pedestrian or bicycle traffic in established retail areas of town or conflict with residential uses.

### **C. Rural Neighborhoods**

Rural Neighborhoods are small commercial developments, or in some cases, historic towns or buildings, that are too small to provide more than convenience shopping and services to surrounding residents. They generally do not have services such as water supply or sewage disposal systems any different from those serving surrounding rural development. Examples of Rural Neighborhoods include the store at Stillwater on the Carnation-Duvall Road, the town of Cumberland on the Enumclaw Plateau, and Preston.

**R-409** The Rural Neighborhoods designated on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map are small-scale business areas that should provide convenience shopping and services for the surrounding community. No new Rural Neighborhoods are needed to serve the Rural Area. Expansion of the boundaries of the existing Rural Neighborhoods shall not be permitted except through the subarea plan process.

The designated Rural Neighborhoods shown on the Land Use map are:

<b>Bear Creek:</b>	Cottage Lake and Redmond-Fall City Road/236th NE
<b>East King County:</b>	Greenwater, Baring and Timberlane Village
<b>Enumclaw:</b>	Cumberland, Krain's Corner and Newaukum
<b>Newcastle:</b>	Coalfield and East Renton Plateau
<b>Snoqualmie:</b>	Preston and Stillwater
<b>Tahoma/Raven Heights:</b>	Maple Valley, Hobart, Ravensdale and North Cedar Grove Road
<b>Vashon:</b>	Burton, Dockton, Tahlequah, Portage, Heights Dock, Jack's Corner, Vashon Center, Vashon Service Center, Vashon Heights and Maury Island Service Center

The policies in this section are based on a recognition of the limited size of most Rural Neighborhoods, the limited utilities and other services available to them, and a desire to preserve their existing character and relationship to the surrounding Rural community.

**R-410** Rural Neighborhoods should accommodate only small-scale retail, community and human services and personal service uses that provide convenience shopping and services to nearby Rural Area residents. If land suitable for residential development is included within the boundaries of a Rural Neighborhood, it should be zoned for rural residential development consistent with the residential development policies of this plan.

**R-411** King County should adopt commercial development standards for Rural Neighborhoods that facilitate economic reuse of existing structures,

**minimize increases in impervious surfaces and encourage retention of historic character and scale. Urban-level parking, landscaping and street improvement standards are not appropriate for Rural Neighborhoods.**

#### **D. Non-Resource Industrial Uses and Development Standards in the Rural Area**

There are two, existing industrial areas in the Rural Area containing multiple industrial uses on several sites. One is located within the southwest portion of the Town of Vashon, and the second is a designated industrial area adjacent to the Rural Neighborhood of Preston. The Preston Industrial Area recognizes an existing concentration of industrial uses that contributes to the economic diversity of the Rural Area, but expansion of this industrial area beyond the identified boundaries is not permitted (see policy C-941).

**R-412                      New industrial uses in the Rural Area shall be permitted only in Rural Towns and in the designated industrial area adjacent to the Rural Neighborhood of Preston.**

In order to preserve rural character and protect sensitive natural features, new rural industrial development needs to be of a scale and nature that is distinct from urban industrial development. The scale and intensity and many of the uses allowed in urban industrial development are not appropriate for rural industrial areas. The following policy applies to all new industrial development in the Rural Area.

**R-413                      Development regulations for non-vested industrial development in the Rural Area shall require the following:**

- a.            Greater setbacks, and reduced building height, floor/lot ratios, and maximum impervious surface percentage standards in comparison to standards for urban industrial development.**
- b.            Maximum protection of sensitive natural features, especially salmonid habitat and water quality.**
- c.            Building and landscape design that respects the aesthetic qualities and character of the Rural Area, and provides substantial buffering from the adjoining uses and scenic vistas.**
- d.            Building colors and materials that are muted, signs that are not internally illuminated, and site and building lighting that is held to the minimum necessary for safety.**
- e.            Heavier industrial uses, non-vested industrial uses producing substantial waste by-products or wastewater discharge, or non-vested paper, chemical and allied products manufacturing uses in the urban industrial zone shall be prohibited.**
- f.            Industrial uses requiring substantial investments in infrastructure such as water, sewers or transportation facilities shall be scaled to avoid the need for public funding of the infrastructure.**

The intent of this policy is to preclude expansion of the industrial area beyond the identified boundaries and to ensure that new development (not previously constructed or vested) in the industrial area meets rural character standards. Site design, landscaping, design and construction of internal and access roads and building scale should reinforce the set boundaries and rural nature of the industrial area to further discourage future industrial expansion beyond the industrial boundary.

There are also existing, isolated industrial sites in the Rural Area which are recognized, but are not appropriate for new industrial uses. Further expansion of these isolated industrial uses is not encouraged, and therefore they are not zoned Industrial.

**R-414                      Existing industrial uses in the Rural Area outside of Rural Towns or the designated industrial area adjacent to the Rural Neighborhood of Preston shall be zoned rural residential but may continue if they qualify as legal, nonconforming uses.**

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# V. Resource Lands

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## Ensuring Conservation and Productive Use of Natural Resource Lands

King County's Natural Resource Lands are those with long-term commercial significance for farming, forestry, and minerals. Products from Natural Resource Lands play an important role in our economy by providing jobs and raw materials such as food, wood, and gravel, and by providing links to our cultural heritage. Responsible stewardship of resource lands produces multiple environmental benefits, such as:

- Stream and salmon protection;
- Clean air and water;
- Wildlife habitat;
- Flood prevention; and
- Groundwater recharge.

Historically, Natural Resource Lands have been poorly protected. For example, only about one-third of the farmland existing in 1945 remains today. The natural resource land base has diminished for many reasons, among them:

- Demand for more land for industrial, commercial, and residential structures;
- Lack of understanding of natural resource value;
- Inconsistent coordination between agencies;
- Poor operational practices in some cases; and
- Lack of an adequate means to compensate natural resource owners for the many non-monetary values their lands provide.

Due to this history, King County has taken major steps to conserve and manage agricultural soils and activities, forestry and mining opportunities. Natural Resource Lands and the industries they support are conserved by encouraging development to occur primarily in the Urban Growth Area as envisioned by the GMA, which requires new development to be focused primarily in the Urban Growth Area. Under this plan, Natural Resource Lands, including designated Agricultural Production Districts, the Forest Production Districts and sites of long-term commercial significance for resource uses, will have minimal new residential and commercial development. New development that does occur will be designed to be compatible with active resource-based uses.

This chapter contains King County's strategy for conservation of these valuable Natural Resource Lands and for encouraging their productive and sustainable management. The strategy consists of policies to guide planning, incentives, education, regulation and purchase of development rights.

Forest, farm and mineral lands are not King County's only natural resources. Many other resource-based industries, such as the fisheries industry, are influenced by King County's land use and planning policies. Policies for the protection and enhancement of air, water, vegetation, fisheries, wildlife and other natural resources can be found in Chapter Four, Environment.

The Rural Forest Commission was established in 1997 to represent the diversity of forest interests in King County. The Commission reviews the development and implementation of strategies, programs, policies



and regulations that benefit forestry and advises the county on ways to preserve rural forests and promote rural forestry.

**R-501                      The Rural Forest Commission shall advise the King County Executive and Council on the development of innovative programs, policies and regulations that benefit forestry and that encourage the retention of the forest land base in King County. King County shall continue to support the Rural Forest Commission with staff and other resources.**

In 1994, the Agriculture Commission was established as a forum for farmers to take an active role in land use decisions, policies and regulations affecting commercial agriculture. The Commission solicits input from agricultural agency technical advisors and others with land use and technical expertise, as well as other affected groups such as the Dairy Federation, Native American Tribes, and project proponents.

**R-502                      The Agricultural Commission shall advise the King County Executive and Council on agricultural issues and agricultural land use. King County shall continue to support the Agricultural Commission with staff and other resources.**

## **A.    Resource Conservation Strategy**

In 1985, the King County Comprehensive Plan designated five Agricultural Production Districts and the Forest Production Districts. Subsequent planning efforts established minimum lot sizes and uses for these districts and their surrounding areas. These land use regulations are consistent with the requirements of the GMA to designate productive lands and to plan for adjacent and nearby land uses compatible with long-term commercial farming and forestry. Provisions for extraction of mineral resources are also included, consistent with the requirement of GMA.

GMA requires designation of agricultural and forest lands of long-term commercial significance. Agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance are designated as Agricultural Production Districts and forest lands of long-term commercial significance are designated as the Forest Production District as shown on the Agricultural and Forest Lands Map.

The GMA also requires designation of mineral resource lands that have long-term significance for the extraction of minerals. Such lands are shown as Designated Mineral Resource Sites on the Mineral Resources Map in this chapter. The role of the Forest Production District in the conservation of mineral resources is also explained below.

**R-503                      King County shall promote and support forestry, agriculture, mining and other resource-based industries as a part of a diverse, regional and sustainable economy.**

**R-504                      Well-managed forestry and agriculture practices are encouraged because of their multiple benefits, including natural resource protection.**

**R-505                      Farm lands, forest lands and mineral resources shall be conserved for productive use through the use of Designated Agriculture and Forest Production Districts and Designated Mineral Resource Sites where the principal and preferred land uses will be commercial resource management activities, and by the designation of appropriate compatible uses on adjacent rural and urban lands.**

**R-506                      Land uses, utilities and transportation facilities adjacent to Designated Agriculture and Forest Production Districts and Designated Mineral Resource Sites, shall be sited and designed to ensure compatibility with resource management.**

- R-507                      King County should facilitate the siting of industries, infrastructure and services that serve and are served by resource-based industries in close proximity to designated Agriculture and Forest Production Districts and Designated Mineral Resource Sites when adverse impacts and incompatibilities can effectively be mitigated.**

Conflicts with surrounding land uses and environmental problems can arise even with the best of precautions. Resource-based industries need reasonable certainty that operations can continue if activities are performed in an environmentally sound manner.

Forest lands and farms provide valuable materials and employment as well as other important functions and values, such as community character, open space and wildlife habitat. These benefits are not without associated costs. Owners of Natural Resource Lands make substantial investments in managing their land. Taxes, fees, labor costs, costs associated with vandalism and market uncertainties can adversely affect the profitability of resource-based industries.

Two tax incentive programs exist to encourage continued farm and forest management both within and outside the Forest Production District and Agriculture Production Districts: the Washington State Timber and Forest Lands Program (RCW 84.33), and the Open Space Tax Program (RCW 84.34).

- R-508                      King County should expand access to preferential tax programs to encourage landowners to continue practicing farming and forestry and to help ensure retention of the resource land base. Preferential tax programs for resource uses should be publicized and marketed. Preferential tax programs applied to resource lands are indicative that the investment expectations of the owners are for the lands to be productive as resource lands. The effectiveness of these programs should be monitored and the programs modified as needed.**

- R-509                      King County shall employ a variety of innovative programs and incentives, tailored to the specific needs of each resource-based industry, to help maintain and enhance resource-based industries.**

Examples of such techniques could include implementation of a Transfer of Development Credits program, technical assistance and education for sustainable land management, expanded education for urban and suburban residents, expanded purchases of land or development rights, the purchase of scenic easements and other less-than-fee-ownership interests which conserve resource uses, establishment of buffers and setbacks for adjacent properties and relief from special levies and local improvement district fees.

When urban development occurs near Natural Resource Lands, conflicts can result. Examples of such conflicts are greater risk of forest fires, vandalism to logging, farm and mining equipment, destruction of young trees and increased mixing of heavy truck and residential traffic, which present safety problems. For these reasons, resource management in or near developed areas often is more costly.

- R-510                      King County should develop and employ effective means to inform affected property owners about nearby resource management activities.**

Natural Resource Lands in King County include privately owned lands in unincorporated areas as well as lands owned and/or managed by city, state and federal agencies and tribes. In addition, a variety of state and federal regulations apply to some resource maintenance, harvesting and extraction operations. Resource conservation efforts, therefore, require a regional perspective and intergovernmental cooperation.

- R-511                      King County shall work cooperatively with cities, federally recognized tribes, other public agencies, private utilities, resource managers, land owners and citizens to conserve public and private Natural Resource**

**Lands for long-term productivity and environmental protection in a consistent and predictable manner.**

- R-512**                      **Designated Forest and Agricultural Production District lands shall not be annexed by cities.**
- R-513**                      **King County should establish written agreements with agencies, tribes and other affected parties whose close coordination and collaboration are essential to effective implementation of resource management programs. Such agreements should serve to establish consensus and commitment to achieving specific resource management goals and to define the specific roles and responsibilities of each agency.**
- R-514**                      **King County should avoid duplication of federal and state regulations that apply to resource-based industries. However, King County reserves the authority to address issues of local concern with regard to resource-based activities and operations.**

A resource management strategy that protects the environment is necessary to maintain the long-term productivity of the resource. Chapter Four, Environment, describes the value of using an integrated, ecosystem-based approach to natural resource and environmental planning and management. This approach, along with sound operational practices by resource-based industries may be able to prevent or minimize environmental impacts associated with resource harvesting and extraction.

- R-515**                      **Resource-based industries should use practices that protect the long-term integrity of the natural and built environment, adjacent land uses, and cultural resources that maintain the long-term productivity of the resource base. Resource industry practices should result in maintenance of ecosystem health and habitat.**
- R-516**                      **Habitat protection requirements should not fall disproportionately on land maintained in agriculture or forestry, and the costs of such protection shall not be disproportionately placed on the owners of such land.**
- R-517**                      **King County should be a leader in resource management by demonstrating environmentally sound agriculture and forestry on County-owned land.**
- R-518**                      **King County shall provide for integrated resource education through trail and sign systems linked with working farms, forests, and mines.**  
**Interpretation should:**  
**a.        Provide historical perspective,**  
**b.        Demonstrate current adaptive resource management practices (forestry, fisheries, wildlife, agriculture); and**  
**c.        Explain economics of various resource uses.**

## **B.    Forestry**

King County forestlands provide local, regional and national benefits that are basic to our quality of life. In addition to supplying a variety of wood and other products, forests emit oxygen, supply pure water, control flooding and soil erosion, enhance ground water recharge, provide habitat for innumerable plant and animal species and offer scenic vistas and recreational opportunities. King County's forests provide employment in wood, paper, recreation, tourism and fishing industries. In sum, properly managed forests are fundamental to a healthy, diverse economy and environment.

The growth in human population has resulted in the loss of forestlands through conversion to non-forest uses. Increasing demands are being placed upon the remaining forest land base to provide goods, recreational opportunities and ecological functions. To address these challenges, forest managers are

embracing more broad-based management methods and strategies that encompass ecosystems, landscapes and watersheds, while continually incorporating new scientific information to improve these approaches. Their efforts, together with the collective foresight and dedication of landowners, interest groups, tribes, citizens and agencies, are needed to ensure that King County's forests continue to contribute to a sustainable way of life for present and future generations.

The first step to maintain and enhance the commercial forest industry is to protect the forest land base. Second, an ecosystem approach to forest management that provides for long-term ecosystem health and productivity and addresses cumulative impacts on non-timber resources should be explored. Third, commercial forestry must be supported and encouraged by minimizing land use conflicts and offering incentives. Finally, forestland conversions that do occur must be managed to minimize environmental degradation.

## **1. Protecting Forest Lands**

The purpose of the Forest Production District is to prevent intrusion of incompatible uses, manage adjacent land uses to minimize land use conflicts and prevent or discourage conversion to non-forestry-based uses. A comparison of the area of forestland converted since 1987 inside the Forest Production District with the area converted outside the District indicates that landowners inside the Forest Production District are committed to long-term forestry. It also indicates that designation and zoning of commercial forest lands help to discourage subdivision and conversion.

Sixty percent of the land area in King County is within the designated Forest Production District (FPD). The FPD comprises 1,300 square miles (825,000 acres) of forestland in east King County.

About 70% of the FPD is in public ownership: parts of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, state and county parks, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, and watersheds for the cities of Seattle and Tacoma.

Commercial forestry is conducted on approximately 250,000 acres in private ownership and on another 277,000 acres of state and federal forestlands. Most of this land is held in large contiguous blocks. At this larger scale, it is easier to manage for multiple purposes such as habitat and long-term forest health

**R-519                      The Forest Production District is comprised of and shall remain in large blocks of contiguous forest lands where the primary land use is commercial forestry. Other resource industry uses, such as mining and agriculture, should be permitted within the Forest Production District when managed to be compatible with forestry.**

**R-520                      The Forest Production District is a long-term designation. Lands may be removed from the Forest Production District only through a subarea planning process, and only to recognize areas with historical retail commercial uses.**

The policies in this section allow for very limited residential uses in the designated Forest Production District, consistent with the objective of continuing forestry as the primary land use. For example, residences may be appropriate to permit forest managers to live on their land. King County zoning and subdivision regulations establish a large parcel size to promote efficient forest operations and to reduce incompatible residential development. Although the zoning calls for an 80-acre minimum lot size, many smaller lots were created prior to application of the zoning. Proliferation of residences in the FPD makes commercial forestry less viable.

**R-521                      King County is committed to maintaining working forestland in the FPD. The Executive shall work with stakeholders to develop mechanisms to promote forestry, reduce conflicts with resource uses and maintain forestland values, and shall report the findings and recommendations to the King County Council by December 31, 2001.**

**R-522**                    **To reduce conflicts with resource uses, a forest management plan shall be required as a condition of development for any residential uses. Accessory dwelling units shall not be allowed in the FPD.**

**R-523**                    **Structures within the Forest Production District should be sited to maintain the productivity of the district. Site plan requirements should limit impervious surface, provide for fire control, protect domestic water supply and prevent conflicts with forest management.**

King County can further protect commercial forestlands and prevent conflicts by working with other public agencies and service providers to consolidate lands and to locate infrastructure facilities to prevent or minimize intrusions. Such actions can also improve the owner's capacity to protect fish and wildlife habitat and other natural resources.

**R-524**                    **In consultation with federally-recognized tribes and other affected agencies and landowners, King County should support land trades that result in consolidated forest ownership and work with forest managers to identify and develop other incentives for continued forestry.**

**R-525**                    **King County opposes the establishment or expansion of special purpose taxing districts and local improvement districts in the Forest Production District, and shall not grant new or expanded franchises for utilities in the Forest Production District, unless demonstrated that they directly benefit forestry or are necessary for transmission of power or water.**

Forest lands have tremendous recreational and aesthetic value. For example, Forest Production District lands are included within the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway along the I-90 corridor. Opportunities for hiking and other forms of outdoor recreation exist within the working forests that are part of the Greenway. (This concept is described in more detail in Chapter Four, Environment, and Chapter Five, Preserving and Enriching Our Communities.) Access to Natural Resource Lands must be carefully managed, however, to prevent conflict with natural resource goals. For example, open gate policies allowing public access may be incompatible with fish and wildlife protection goals and sometimes may interfere with forestry operations by allowing such activities as garbage dumping, vandalism and timber theft.

**R-526**                    **Public and private forest owners are encouraged to provide for recreational, educational and cultural uses when compatible with forest protection.**

Recreational and institutional developments, such as conference centers, ski areas and associated hotels, allow more people to enjoy the aesthetic benefits of forest lands. Such facilities are acceptable if located in areas of existing development, such as Snoqualmie Pass, and their operation and use are restricted adequately to minimize conflict with resource lands. Major recreational or institutional development sites can adversely affect the Forest Production District because they reduce the forest land base and conflict with other resource management goals.

**R-527**                    **No master planned resorts shall be permitted in the Forest Production District. New or expansion of existing recreational or institutional uses in the Forest Production District may be permitted if compatible with long term forestry, interests of federally-recognized tribes and other resource management goals.**

Adverse environmental impacts associated with forest practices have the potential to heal over time, whereas those associated with development are usually irreversible. For this reason, forest lands being converted to non-forest uses must be held to higher land clearing and grading standards than those that apply under the Forest Practices Act must be used, for example, to protect surface and ground water quality and quantity, control storm water runoff and minimize damage to fish and wildlife habitat.

When applying for a forest practice permit, a landowner must state whether the land is to be retained in forest use or converted to a non-forest use. The Forest Practices Act, as amended in 1997, requires local jurisdictions to impose a six-year development moratorium on any properties for which the forest practice application did not state the intention to convert to a non-forest use, unless the application contains a conversion option harvest plan approved by the local jurisdiction.

**R-528**                      **On that portion of a parcel directly impacted by forest practices King County shall impose a six-year development moratorium for landowners who do not state their intent to convert at the time of Forest Practice Application or who do not harvest the site according to a King County approved Conversion Option Harvest Plan. The Executive will develop a list of allowable exceptions to the development moratorium on portions of the property that were not part of the harvest permit. These exceptions shall be included in the 2001 Comprehensive Plan Update. King County shall develop means to ensure that potential buyers of properties subject to the moratorium are alerted to the moratorium.**

Landowners choosing to convert their land to non-forest uses also must state their intent on the Forest Practice Application and, as provided in the Forest Practices Act, must conduct their forest practices according to applicable local government regulations. If a landowner intends to convert their land to a non-forest use, they must submit a Forest Practices Application to King County and meet all King County standards.

**R-529**                      **King County should continue to work with all affected parties and the Washington Department of Natural Resources to improve the enforcement of forest practice regulations in the urban and rural areas, and to ensure that landowners comply with County regulations when they are converting portions of the site to a non-forest use. Harvesting of forest lands for the purpose of converting to non-forestry uses shall meet all applicable county standards for clearing and sensitive areas management.**

## **2. Promoting Forest Management**

King County has worked with state, federal, and private landowners on multi-party resource plans, such as the Middle Fork Snoqualmie Plan, the plan for Rattlesnake Ridge, and numerous watershed planning efforts. There will continue to be opportunities for interagency cross-ownership cooperation, which will result in improved resource management and conservation.

**R-530**                      **Working with public and private forest land managers, King County shall encourage long term forest productivity and the protection of land and water resources by participating in collaborative, multi-ownership planning efforts.**

**R-531**                      **King County promotes forest management that achieves long-term forest health, protection of watersheds, sensitive areas and habitat to support fish and wildlife populations, protection of threatened and endangered species, and preservation and economic viability of working forests.**

**R-532**                      **King County shall encourage the development of private/public partnerships that provide incentive for landowners to practice innovative, fish-friendly forestry and that can help ensure retention of the forest resource land base in perpetuity.**

An example of such a partnership is the Mountains to Sound Greenway Biosolids Forestry Program, which includes King County, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, the Greenway Trust, the University of Washington and the Weyerhaeuser Company. One of the elements of this program involves the acquisition of forestlands that are vulnerable to residential and commercial development.

Lands are acquired by a combination of county funds and federal Forest Legacy funds and then transferred to the State DNR for management. By deed, these lands stay in forest resource use in perpetuity and are managed according to the state's Habitat Conservation Plan. Seventy-five percent of all revenues generated are returned to King County. The lands that have been acquired help to form the block of public ownership along I-90, providing wildlife corridors, opportunities for trails and recreation, and the water quality protection provided by forest cover.

In addition to landscape-level planning and analysis, resource managers should identify specific areas in their forest ownership that are degraded or negatively impacting aquatic resources. An example of such areas are logging roads or gravel mines no longer needed and scheduled to be abandoned or riparian zones that are not sufficiently vegetated. Organic soil amendments, when properly used, can greatly enhance vegetative growth and restore productivity to these sites, thus protecting fish and other aquatic resources. The use of recycled organic wastes generated in King County closes the recycling "loop" and helps us sustain the productivity of our resource lands.

**R-533                      King County encourages the use of recycled, organic-based soil amendments and fertilizers in forest ecosystems, which can reduce erosion and sedimentation into streams, increase water-holding capacity of soils, stimulate the growth of trees and other vegetation and enhance fish and wildlife habitat. King County shall work with the general public and private and public forestland owners to encourage the selective and appropriate use of these materials for ecosystem enhancement and restoration.**

One of the most successful efforts already underway is the use of the County's biosolids to fertilize public and private forests and the use of biosolids compost to help restore old logging roads in the Mountains to Sound Greenway in eastern King County. Volunteers from many local youth and environmental groups, including the King County World Conservation Corps, are involved in this program, which involves removal of the logging roads, restoration of the natural slope of the land, and the use of compost to speed vegetation growth.

## **C. Agriculture**

Land suitable for farming is an irreplaceable natural resource. Since 1959, almost 60 percent of King County's prime agricultural land has been lost to urban and suburban development. Of 100,000 acres available for farming 40 years ago, today only 42,000 acres remain in agriculture. Fortunately, the amount of agricultural land has stabilized due, in large part, to a variety of County policies and initiatives to conserve these commercially viable resource-based lands.

Agricultural lands and farming provide many benefits to the citizens of King County including scenic open space, a connection to our cultural heritage, fresh local foods and a diverse economy. In 1992, farmers in King County produced over \$84 million in agricultural sales. Commercial agricultural production, however, has declined by 30 percent in gross sales since 1978.

This section focuses on the county's efforts to maintain and enhance commercial agriculture for the value of local produce, dairy products, keeping livestock and for scenic and historic values. To meet the GMA requirement to maintain and enhance agriculture, a variety of methods and programs continue to be necessary. The policies call for King County to:

- Protect productive farmland by designation and zoning;
- Limit development to uses that are necessary to support commercial agriculture;
- Prevent or minimize land use conflicts between farming operations and adjacent land uses;
- Allow necessary infrastructure (markets, water, affordable housing, supply stores, technical services, tax incentives) that supports commercial agriculture; and
- Encourage farming practices that conserve soils and protect water quality, fisheries and wildlife.

## 1. Protecting Agricultural Lands

In 1979, voters approved a \$50 million ballot measure to protect farmland threatened by development. The Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) became the first voter-approved measure in the nation to protect farmland in a metropolitan area. By purchasing the development rights, the FPP keeps farmland open and available through covenants that restrict development and limit the properties' uses exclusively for agriculture and open space. The covenants "run with the land" in perpetuity so the land is protected regardless of ownership. Under the FPP, the county owns the development rights, however, the lands remain in the private ownership of over 200 property owners. The county cannot sell or remove its interest in FPP lands with the exception of conveying public road or utility easements.

In 1995, the County approved an additional \$3 million to the purchase of additional development rights under the Farmland Preservation Program. In October 1999, the County formally recognized the 20th anniversary of the Farmland Preservation Program and its success to date in preserving over 12,800 acres of farmland for the generations of today and tomorrow.

**R-534                      King County shall continue to implement the objectives of the Farmland Preservation Program. Protection of property purchased under the FPP shall be a high priority when balancing conflicting interests such as locating transportation, active recreation or utility facilities.**

Agriculture is most productive in agricultural communities where neighbors support agriculture, where parcels are large enough for commercial agriculture and where labor, supplies and markets for farm products are available. King County's farm soils and most profitable farms are usually found in contiguous blocks with few non-agricultural uses. In 1985, King County established Agricultural Production Districts (APDs) with large lot zoning and specifying agriculture as the preferred use in these areas.

The Agricultural Production Districts, shown on the Agriculture and Forest Lands Map in this chapter, present the least number of land use conflicts for agriculture, contain agricultural support activities and provide the best environment for farming in King County. The five Agricultural Production Districts are: the Sammamish Valley, the Snoqualmie Valley, the Lower Green River Valley, the Upper Green River Valley and the Enumclaw Plateau. Most of the farmlands preserved under the FPP are found in these APDs.

**R-535                      Agricultural Production Districts are blocks of contiguous farmlands where agriculture is supported through the protection of agricultural soils and related support services and activities. Roads and natural features are appropriate boundaries for Agricultural Production Districts to reduce the possibility of conflicts with adjacent land uses.**

**R-536                      King County should purchase additional development rights to farmland in the Agricultural Production Districts as funding becomes available.**

Livestock, dairy and large-scale commercial row crop operations require large parcels of land to allow for production which is profitable and sustainable. Generally, 35 acres is needed for full-time wholesale commercial production of such products. Specialty agricultural products, products that are direct-marketed and part-time farming enterprises generally need less acreage to be profitable.

**R-537                      All parcels within the boundaries of an APD should be zoned Agricultural, either A-10 or A-35. If small parcels in the APD are not zoned for Agriculture, permitted nonresidential uses must not conflict with agricultural uses in the APD.**

**R-538                      Lands within Agricultural Production Districts should remain in parcels large enough for commercial agriculture. A residential density of one home per 35 acres shall be applied where the predominant lot size is 35 acres or larger, and a residential density of one home per 10 acres shall be applied where the predominant lot size is less than 35 acres.**



- R-539**                    **Agriculture should be the principal land use in the Agricultural Production Districts. Permanent new construction within districts shall be sited to prevent conflicts with commercial farming or other agricultural uses, and non-agricultural uses shall be limited. New development shall not disrupt agriculture operations and shall have a scale compatible with an active farming district.**
- R-540**                    **On-site housing for farm employees shall be allowed where this can be accomplished without unnecessarily removing land from agricultural use or conflicting with other public interests. King County should develop guidelines to allow on-site housing for farm employees, including guidelines that account for the restrictive covenants on properties in the Farmland Preservation Program.**

Some of the highest quality salmon habitat in King County is found within Agricultural Production Districts. Additional protection of critical habitat within the APDs is likely to be required under the Endangered Species Act. Protection and enhancement of existing salmon habitat is a resource based land use that should be included in all farm management plans. Specific habitat protection rules should not jeopardize the economic viability of individual farms.

- R-541**                    **Creation of wetland mitigation banks is allowed on APD land only when the purpose is to compensate for filling wetlands for development within that APD.**
- R-542**                    **Maintaining the viability of farmlands is a high priority for King County. Within the Agricultural Production Districts, measures to protect threatened or endangered species shall be tailored to ensure working farms can continue to operate.**

Two Agricultural Production Districts (APD) in or near urban areas, the Lower Green River Valley and Sammamish Valley, were designated in the 1985 Comprehensive Plan, and those designations have been retained. The development rights from many, but not all, of the parcels in these two Districts have been purchased through the Farmlands Preservation Program. The Lower Green APD is completely surrounded by Urban designated land and as such, functions as both prime agriculture land and urban separator.

- R-543**                    **King County commits to preserve Agricultural Production District parcels in or near the Urban Growth Area because of their high production capabilities, their proximity to markets, and their value as open space.**
- R-544**                    **The Lower Green River Agricultural Production District is a regionally designated resource that is to remain in unincorporated King County. The Lower Green River Agricultural Production District functions as an urban separator between the cities of Kent and Auburn. King County may contract with other jurisdictions to provide some local services to this area as appropriate.**

Parks (especially those with active recreational facilities) and farms are not necessarily good neighbors, since park users can trespass and damage crops, animals and farm equipment. Recreation near and within districts can be planned to prevent trespass. For example, a park located across a river or ravine from an Agricultural Production District (APD) or a farm would have a pleasant view of farmland without encouraging trespass.

There are a small number of instances in which APD property has been purchased, using recreation funds, prior to APD designation. Under these circumstances, active recreational uses should be allowed on such APD property. Furthermore, active recreational uses permitted on an APD property may be

transferred to other properties within the same APD provided that the properties from which such active recreation use is transferred permanently remains limited to open space or agricultural uses.

- R-545**                      **When new parks or trails are planned for areas within or adjacent to Agricultural Production Districts, King County shall work with farmers to minimize impacts to farmland and agricultural operations. Active recreational facilities shall not be located within Agricultural Production Districts, except under the following circumstances:**
- a.        The property within the APD has been purchased with funds that were earmarked for recreation, and the purchase pre-dates designation of the APD; or**
  - b.        There is a transfer of uses between a property purchased consistent with subsection a and other properties within the same APD.**

**Under the limited circumstances in which active recreational facilities are allowed in the APD, activities and site improvements shall be limited in order to allow the future use of the property for agricultural purposes when the recreational use is abandoned.**

Public road and utility projects within and through Agricultural Production Districts must be designed to prevent disruption to agriculture. For example, roads shall have adequate shoulders and signs to protect farm equipment and alert faster vehicles to the presence of farming activity. Therefore, road and utility district capital facilities and plans, including water, waste water and drainage, need to ensure that services are consistent with preservation of long-term agriculture. (Chapter Eight, Facilities and Services, contains policies requiring special district plans to be consistent with land use plans.)

- R-546**                      **Public services and utilities within and adjacent to Agricultural Production Districts (APDs) shall be designed to minimize significant adverse impacts on agriculture and to maintain total farmland acreage and the area's historic agricultural character:**
- a.        Whenever feasible, water lines, sewer lines and other public facilities should avoid crossing Agricultural Production Districts. Installation should be timed to minimize negative impacts on seasonal agricultural practices; and**
  - b.        Road projects planned for the Agricultural Production Districts including additional roads or the widening of roads should be limited to those needed for safety and which benefit agricultural uses. Where possible, arterials should be routed around the APDs. Roads that cross APDs should be aligned, designed and maintained to minimize negative impacts on agriculture, and to support farm traffic; and**
  - c.        In cases when public or privately owned facilities meeting regional needs must intrude into Agricultural Production Districts, they should be built and located to minimize disruption of agricultural activity.**

- R-547**                      **Lands can be removed from the Agricultural Production Districts only when it can be demonstrated that:**
- a.        Removal of the land will not diminish the productivity of prime agricultural soils or the effectiveness of farming within the local APD boundaries; and**
  - b.        The land is determined to be no longer suitable for agricultural purposes.**

**In addition to meeting these two tests, removal of the land from the APD may only occur if it is mitigated through the addition of agricultural land abutting**

**the same APD of equal acreage and of equal or greater soils and agriculture value.**

## **2. Sustaining Agriculture and Farming**

King County has made a significant investment in preserving farmland for agriculture and open space uses. The next step is to help existing and future farmers maintain and operate their farms and inform consumers and businesses, such as restaurants, of the benefits of locally grown foods. In order to further maintain and enhance commercial farming on small farmland parcels, farmers and prospective farmers must have access to information on marketing and production strategies for small acreages, the potential for specialty crops and ecological farming techniques.

**R-548                    King County shall work with and provide support to the work of Washington State University Cooperative Extension for technical and marketing assistance for small-scale commercial farmers.**

**R-549                    King County shall continue to support innovative initiatives, such as the Puget Sound Fresh and Farm Link Programs, to promote and enhance agriculture in King County.**

**R-550                    The County should develop specific incentives to encourage agricultural activities in the remaining prime farmlands located outside the Agricultural Production District. These incentives could include tax credits, expedited permit review, reduced permit fees, permit exemptions for activities complying with Best Management Practices or similar programs.**

Agricultural practices modify the natural environment in order to produce food or fiber or maintain livestock for human use. Ideally, practices that maintain the productivity of the lands also protect environmental quality. Farmers, technical advisors and environmental regulators must work together to understand the relationships between production practices, environmental protection and profitability. These practices, referred to as Best Management Practices, are designed to prevent erosion, retain riparian vegetation, avoid stream bank collapse, properly dispose of animal wastes, safely use and dispose of pesticides and prevent excessive surface water runoff.

**R-551                    King County shall provide incentives, educational programs and other methods to encourage agricultural practices which maintain water quality, protect public health, protect fish and wildlife habitat, protect historic resources and prevent erosion of valuable agricultural soils while maintaining the functions needed for agricultural production.**

## **D. Mineral Resources**

King County contains many valuable mineral resources, including deposits of coal, sand, rock, gravel, silica, peat, clay, metallic ores and potentially recoverable gas and oil. Mining and processing these deposits is an important part of King County's economy, currently providing hundreds of jobs and producing materials used locally, regionally and nationally. Mining also has historic significance, in that it provided the impetus for past development in many parts of King County, including Black Diamond and the Newcastle area.

King County is required by the state Growth Management Act to designate and conserve mineral lands. In doing so the County must assure that land uses adjacent to mineral lands do not interfere with the continued use of mineral lands in their accustomed manner and in accordance with best management practices. The policies in this section explain the steps taken to designate and conserve mineral resource lands and provide direction on the comprehensive review needed before additional sites are designated for mineral resource extraction.

Four main steps are necessary to maintain and enhance commercial mineral resource industries. First, mineral resource sites should be conserved through designation and zoning. Second, land use conflicts

between mining, processing and related operations and adjacent land uses should be prevented or minimized. Third, operational practices should protect environmental quality, fisheries and wildlife, in balance with the needs of the industry. Finally, mining areas need to be reclaimed in a timely and appropriate manner.

The Mineral Resources Map identifies four different types of Mineral Resource Sites. The sites were identified in the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan or in subsequent annual updates. Following the Mineral Resources Map is a spreadsheet that contains information on each Mineral Resource Site parcel.

The Designated Mineral Resources Sites on the Mineral Resources Map satisfy King County's responsibility to designate and conserve mineral resources consistent with requirements of the GMA. All Designated Mineral Resources Sites have Mineral zoning. The criteria used in the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan called for designation of properties that at the time were either zoned outright for mining or those operating under an approved Unclassified Use Permit. In addition to the designated Mineral Resources Sites, the Forest Production District (FPD) and Forest (F) zone preserves the opportunity for mineral extraction. Mining is a permitted or conditional use in the F zone. Because forestry does not preclude future mineral extraction, King County considers the FPD as part of its strategy to conserve mineral resources.

The Mineral Resources Map also shows Potential Mineral Resource Sites. These are sites where King County expects some future surface mining to occur or where the owner or operator indicates an interest in future mining. Most of the Potential Mineral Resources Sites shown on the map contain sand and/or gravel, however, a few contain other mineral resources such as quarry rock and coal. Because of the geology of King County, most valuable metallic mineral resources are located in the Forest Production District, and are therefore already protected from urban development. Identification of Potential Mineral Resources Sites satisfies the GMA requirements to not knowingly preclude opportunities for future mining and to inform nearby property owners of the potential for future mining use of these areas in order to prevent or minimize conflicts.

The Mineral Resources Map also shows Non-Conforming Mineral Resources Sites. These are sites on which some mining operations pre-dated King County zoning regulations without appropriate zoning or other land use approval. Mining for these sites has not been authorized through a Land Use Map or zoning designation. These sites are shown for informational purposes only. Mining can occur on an identified site only if mining has been approved as a non-conforming use by the Department of Development and Environmental Services, and mining activities have received all other necessary permit approvals. Because the sites have not undergone formal review to be designated on the Land Use Map or zoned for mining, the sites do not have long-term commercial significance. However, they can continue to serve mineral supply needs.

The Mineral Resources Map also shows Owner Identified Potential Coal Mining Sites that contain subsurface coal resources. These sites could be mined by either underground or surface mining techniques. Because of uncertainties involving the economics of energy and related market conditions, it is not always possible to determine the timing or likelihood of coal resources extraction in potential coal mining areas. Underground and surface coal mining is subject to permitting and enforcement by the Federal Government. King County regulates land use decisions governing surface facilities. Because of the difficulty in precisely locating these facilities prior to an actual proposal, King County determined to not apply Potential M zoning to owner-identified coal resources sites.

- R-552**                      **King County shall identify existing and potential mining sites on the Mineral Resources Map in order to conserve mineral resources, promote compatibility with nearby land uses, protect environmental quality, maintain and enhance mineral resource industries and serve to notify property owners of the potential for mining activities. The County shall identify:**
- a.        Sites with existing Mineral zoning as Designated Mineral Resource Sites;**
  - b.        Sites where the landowner or operator has indicated an interest in mining, sites that as of the date of adoption of the 1994**

Comprehensive Plan had potential Quarrying/Mining zoning, or sites that the County determines might support future mining as Potential Mineral Resource Sites;

- c. Sites where mining operations pre-date zoning regulations but without zoning or other land use approvals as Non-Conforming Mineral Resource Sites; and
- d. Owner-Identified Potential Sub-Surface Coal Sites.

**R-553**

**King County shall designate as Mining on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map those sites that had Potential Mineral (M) zoning prior to the date of adoption of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan and those sites that had Mineral zoning as of the date of the adoption of the King County Comprehensive Plan 2000 Update.**

**A Mining designation on the Land Use Map shall not create a presumption that Mineral zoning will be approved for sites with Potential Mineral zoning. Potential Mineral zoning shall not be applied to additional sites.**

Mining is an intense operation that may continue for many years. Mining operations can significantly change the land being mined and have impacts on the environment and on nearby properties. King County requires comprehensive review, including environmental analysis, prior to approving a Land Use Map and zoning change. Site specific environmental review will also be required for a grading permit or any other permit that is necessary for a mining operation. Therefore, a comprehensive site-specific study is required prior to any such approval.

**R-554**

**King County may designate additional sites on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map as Mining only following a site-specific rezone to Mineral zoning. Upon approval of a rezone to Mineral zoning, the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map shall be amended to designate the site as mining during the next Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle. King County should approve applications for site-specific rezones to Mineral zoning and applications for permits that would authorize mineral extraction and processing only following site-specific environmental study, early and continuous public notice and comment opportunities, when:**

- a. The proposed site contains rock, sand, gravel, coal, oil, gas or other mineral resources;
- b. The proposed site is large enough to confine or mitigate all operational impacts;
- c. The proposal will allow operation with limited conflicts with adjacent land uses when mitigating measures are applied;
- d. The proposal has been evaluated under the State Environmental Policy Act so that the County may approve, condition or deny applications consistent with the County's substantive SEPA authority, and in order to mitigate significant adverse environmental impacts.
- e. Roads or rail facilities serving or proposed to serve the site can safely and adequately handle transport of products and are in close proximity to the site.

If King County denies an application for a site-specific rezone it should remove the Mining land use designation and the associated Potential Mineral zoning for the site. If the County denies a permit that would authorize mineral extraction and/or processing on a Designated Mineral Resources Site, the County should consider new information generated during the permit review process to determine whether the site is not properly designated as mineral resource land of long term commercial significance, the designation for the site on the Mineral Resources Map should be changed from Designated Mineral Resources Site to Potential surface Mineral Resource Site. In addition, the Mining land use designation

and the Mineral zoning classification for the site should be amended to be compatible with the surrounding properties.

**R-555** King County should remove the Mining land use designation on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map and associated Potential Mineral zone or Mineral zoning for any sites that have been denied a rezone to Mineral.

If a grading or other permit necessary for the extraction of mineral resources is denied on a Designated Mineral Resource Site, the County shall evaluate whether such mineral resource designation is appropriate. The re-evaluation process may occur during the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle and information produced during the permit review process shall be used to evaluate the appropriateness of changing the existing designation. If the County determines that the site should not be designated as mineral resource land of long term commercial significance as defined in the Growth Management Act, the site shall be redesignated to a Potential Surface Mineral Resource Site on the Mineral Resources Map and to a land use designation and zoning classification compatible with the surrounding properties.

**R-556** King County may update the Mineral Resources Map to identify additional Potential Mineral Resource Sites only during the four-year Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle.

**R-557** The preferred adjacent land uses to sites designated as Mining on the Land Use Map are mining, industrial, open space or forestry uses. Sites for newly proposed Mineral zones shall not be adjacent to or within Agricultural Production Districts. Agricultural lands and operations should be protected from significant impacts associated with nearby mine operations.

**R-558** Mining activities are permitted within the Forest Production District, consistent with Policy R-519. However, a conditional use permit shall be required for mining activities in the Forest Production District located within one-quarter mile of established residences or for proposals seeking to use local access streets where abutting lots are developed for residential use.

**R-559** In order to comprehensively assess the environmental impacts associated with a zoning change, conditional use or operating approval for a mining proposal, the range of environmental impacts, including short-term and long-term effects arising or existing over the lifetime of the proposal, shall be assessed at the earliest possible stage. This should include the potential for future proposals for structures and operations related to mining, such as asphalt and concrete batch plants.

**R-560** King County should prevent or minimize conflicts with mining when planning land uses adjacent to Designated and Potential Mineral Resource Sites. Subarea plans may indicate areas where mining is an inappropriate land use. Designated and Potential Mineral Resource Sites and non-conforming sites should be shown on Mineral Resources Map and subarea plan maps in order to notify nearby property owners and residents of existing and prospective mining activities.

**R-561** The periodic review process for mineral extractive and processing operations shall include sufficient public notice and comment opportunities. The purpose of the periodic review process is to provide opportunities for public review and comment on the mineral resource facility's fulfillment of state and county regulations and implementation of industry-standard Best

Management Practices, and for King County to modify, add or remove conditions to address new circumstances and/or unanticipated project-generated impacts. The periodic review process is not intended to re-examine the appropriateness of the mineral resource use, or to consider expansion of operations beyond the scope of existing permitted operations since that review would be accomplished through the county's permitting process. The periodic review is intended to be a part of King County's ongoing enforcement and inspections of mineral resource sites, and not to be a part of the County's permitting process.

**R-562**

Conditions and mitigations for significant adverse environmental impacts associated with mining operations should be required, especially in the following areas:

- a. Air quality;
- b. Environmentally sensitive and critical areas, such as surface and ground water quality and quantity, wetlands, fisheries and wildlife habitats;
- c. Noise levels;
- d. Vibration;
- e. Light and glare;
- f. Vehicular access and safety;
- g. Land and shoreline uses;
- h. Traffic impacts;
- i. Visual impacts;
- j. Cultural and historic features and resources;
- k. Site security; and
- l. Others unique to specific sites and proposals

**R-563**

King County should work with the state and federal governments to ensure that proposals for underground mining, oil and gas extraction, and surface coal mining are reviewed with consideration of local land use and environmental requirements.

**R-564**

King County should work with the State Department of Natural Resources to ensure that mining areas are reclaimed in a timely and appropriate manner. Reclamation of mining sites in the Forest Production District should return the land to forestry. Where mining is completed in phases, reclamation also should be completed in phases as the resource is depleted. When reclamation of mining sites located outside of the Forest Production District is completed, the site should be considered for redesignation to a land use designation and zoning classification compatible with the surrounding properties.

**R-565**

King County shall encourage the removal of existing stockpiles of previously mined material in order to promote and achieve reclamation of land to its highest and best use.